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Book Reviews

Caesar's Commentaries on the Gallic War. [Translated into English.]

By T. RICE HOLMES. New York: MacMillan, 1908. Pp. 297.

\$1.40.

It is indeed strange that up to the present time we have had no adequate rendering into English of Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic War*—nothing that would convey to the English reader even a moderately correct idea of what Caesar said and the way he said it. It is therefore a matter for congratulation that the learned author of *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul* and *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar* has supplied the lack.

The text is provided with notes upon historical, archaeological, and textual matters where needed for a clear understanding of the author's meaning. These notes have been kept within reasonable bounds and offer in concise and convenient form for the teacher of Caesar the main results of the author's investigations embodied in his two larger works. The rendering is exact, is readable, and being stripped of all ornament seems to the reviewer to reproduce in a fairly satisfactory manner the stylistic qualities of Caesar.

A comparison with Long's translation of the *Civil War* is interesting in this connection. The two works in the original do not differ materially in style yet there can hardly be a greater difference than between the style and tone of the two translations. Long's work we were glad enough to have with its irreproachable and elegant English, but it is as far as may be from Caesar's style and is marred by a tone of modernity and provincialism. This fault is entirely lacking in Dr. Holmes's rendering for the style is chaste and controlled.

No errors of interpretation and few infelicities of expression have been noted. In Book I, chap. xxv, the following occurs: "and as the iron bent they could not pull the javelins out or fight properly with their left arm encumbered, so that many after repeated jerks, preferred to drop their shields and fight bare." *Nudo corpore*, certainly may mean bare, but does the context justify the rendering? The expression is a bit startling.

Book I, chap. xxviii: "When they were brought back he treated them as enemies," is exact enough, yet the expression would hardly convey to the English reader the idea that he massacred them. The substitution of "traitors" for "enemies" might convey the idea with slight change. Such minor points seem trivial in face of the fine scholarship and good taste evinced in the translation.

It is to be hoped that more of the Latin classics as yet unavailable in respectable English may soon appear. Among recent translations, Miller's *Tragedies of Seneca*, Williams' *Aeneid*, and Holmes's *Caesar* have set a high standard.

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